

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 174

By Newton

A RESOLUTION relative to the designation of the Cherokee Overhill Territory in Polk, McMinn, Monroe and Meigs counties as a National Heritage Area.

WHEREAS, the National Park Service has defined a National Heritage Area as “a place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography”; and

WHEREAS, to date, twenty-four National Heritage Areas (NHA) have been designated by Congress to commemorate, conserve, and promote such irreplaceable cultural landscapes, many of which are facing irrevocable alteration through development or neglect; and

WHEREAS, National Heritage Areas are a strategy that encourages residents, government agencies, non-profit groups, and private partners to collaboratively plan and implement programs and projects that recognize, preserve and celebrate many of America’s defining landscapes, without compromising traditional local control over and use of such landscapes; and

WHEREAS, National Heritage Area designation includes limited technical and financial assistance from the National Park Service, which primarily provides planning and interpretative assistance and expertise, but also connects the management entity of a NHA with other federal agencies; federal financial assistance provides valuable seed money that covers basic expenses, such as staffing, and leverages other money from state, local, and private sources by means of a dollar-for-dollar match requirement; and

WHEREAS, Polk, McMinn and Monroe counties and part of Meigs County (which collectively comprise an area known as the Cherokee Overhill Territory) definitely qualify as a

distinctive landscape that is rich in cultural, natural, and archaeological sites and resources related to our state's and nation's Native American peoples and their history, as well as early frontier settlement by the British; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee Overhill Territory's fascinating heritage is revealed by these unique sites and resources, including Fort Loudoun (built in 1756 as one of the earliest British fortifications on the western frontier and played a significant role in helping Great Britain secure the trans-Appalachian region from France during the Seven Years War before surrendering to Cherokee attack in 1760); Fort Armistead (founded in 1832 to stop intrusion by gold prospectors on Cherokee land and finally serving as a camp for more than 3,000 Cherokee deportees on the Trail of Tears to Fort Cass in 1838); the Unicoi Turnpike Trail (a National Millennium Flagship Trail that was used as an artery of trade before written history was improved to become the first direct wagon connection across the Southern Appalachians in 1813, and served as the first leg of the journey for deported Cherokees on the Trail of Tears in 1838); and the awe-inspiring Hiawassee Ocoee Scenic River State Park (featuring canoeing, rafting, fishing, hiking, nature photography, boating, picnic facilities, primitive camping and many scenic views on the Hiawassee and premier white-water river rafting on the Ocoee); and

WHEREAS, the designation of the Cherokee Overhill Territory as a National Heritage Area would enable local stakeholders (including individual citizens, county, municipal, state and federal governments, and non-profit and private sector interests) to access federal and other funding to help maintain the distinct qualities that integrate the area and make it special by protecting and preserving these sensitive and important historical, cultural, archaeological, and natural sites and resources; and

WHEREAS, such National Heritage Area designation would also greatly enhance cultural and educational opportunities and promote tourism in the region; and

WHEREAS, because it is imperative that future generations be able to understand and appreciate the complex and ever evolving interrelationship between people and land, it is also imperative that the Cherokee Overhill Territory be designated a National Heritage Area by Congress; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that this Body hereby most fervently urges and encourages the Tennessee Congressional delegation to utilize their respective powers and influence to the fullest extent possible (including securing the passage of the necessary legislation) to obtain National Heritage Area designation for Polk, McMinn and Monroe counties and part of Meigs County, specifically to include the geographical area known as the "Cherokee Overhill Territory," to protect and preserve for present and future generations such area's unique natural, cultural, historic, archaeological, and recreational resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to each member of the Tennessee Congressional delegation and to the National Park Service.